LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of Left Unity

Founded 1921 Editor: R. Palme Dutt

DOLLAR CRISIS The Editor

Labour Party Conference

Sid Bidwell MP on UNEMPLOYMENT

Ralph Millner on the COMMON MARKET

The Angela Davis Trial: Bettina Aptheker

Rents: Tom Vernon

Shipbuilding: Cmdr E. P. Young

György Lukács 1885-1971: István Friss

Tribute to J. D. Bernal by R.P.D.

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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Notes of the Month

1. FROM BLACKPOOL TO BRIGHTON

September 20, 1971

This year's Labour Party Conference meets in the midst of a sharply changing international economic and political situation, whose challenge throws all the greater responsibility on Labour policy today and on a prospective Labour Government. The main domestic issues have already been handled in a number of positive and progressive decisions at the Blackpool Trades Union Congress. It will be for the Brighton Labour Party Conference to carry forward these policies with appropriate decisions for action, especially in two fields. First, with the approach of the key parliamentary vote on the Common Market at the end of October, it is urgent to ensure that the full parliamentary strength of Labour is mobilised against the Government, with an end to divided voices and evasions; and the fight will need to be conducted at Brighton to make effective the opposition to the Heath Government's strategy of bulldozing Britain into the Common Market without any popular consultation, by a firm pledge to repeal any such entry or legislation involved. Second, the Brighton Labour Party Conference will need to carry forward the fight, already powerfully expressed by the TUC, for an alternative economic policy which will break with the disastrous course of Toryism and previous Labour Governments, combat unemployment with a positive programme of expansion and raising of standards, open a direct challenge to the monopolist interests, and support every aspect of the present working class struggle, at this moment spearheaded by the Clyde shipyard workers.

Trade Unions and the Labour Party

Representatives of the ten million trade unionists, who carried with overwhelming support such important and positive progressive decisions at Blackpool, have the strength and the power, if they use it, to carry forward such policies at Brighton. Today the trade unions, with 518,520 affiliated members in the Labour Party, alongside the 680,191 individual members, represent nine-tenths of the membership of the Labour Party. They have thus the power and the responsibility and the duty to make the policy demands of the working class,

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representing the overwhelming majority of the population, effective and sovereign in the Labour Party, and not to allow this sovereignty to be overruled by claims to a supposed superior overlordship on the part of a handful of parliamentarians who, without this organised trade union connection, would be of no more political significance than the remnant of Liberal MPs, surviving from a once-powerful governing party which in its day was able for a certain period to deceive and hold the support of the workers. The trade unions today have a foremost political role and responsibility, which they need to express with their full strength alongside all left fighters in the Labour Party. These issues and themes were examined last month in the Notes on 'Trade Unions and Politics' in connection with the TUC. But the new events and sharp changes in the international situation, with the collapse of American dollar domination in the capitalist world; the shifts in international power relations with President Nixon's projected visit to China; the critical confrontation in the Middle East; and the parallel advance of socialism and steps forward in the fight for peace alongside the dangerous offensives of reaction: all make it essential to give first attention this month to some of these new developments in the international situation.

2. DOLLAR CRISIS

> **'Capitalist production forever strives to overcome this metallic barrier, the material and fantastic barrier of wealth and its movements, in proportion as the credit system develops, but forever breaks its head on this same barrier.'**
>
> MARX, *Capital*, Vol. 3, ch. xxxv, §1: English edition, p. 674.

President Nixon's offensive launched on August 15, with the collapse of the dollar's gold convertibility after a quarter of a century of domination of the dollar in the capitalist world, marked the end of an era. The domination of the dollar in the capitalist world reflected the overwhelming superiority of strength of American capitalism at the end of the second world war in contrast to the other war-impoverished capitalist countries. This superiority was expressed in every sphere, economic, political and military, and received formal juridical expression in the field of currency with the treaty enthronement of the dollar as the equivalent of gold.

Mechanism of Dollar Domination

The statutory denomination of the dollar as the obligatory equivalent of gold in the currency reserves of every capitalist country was

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established by the Bretton Woods Agreement of 44 nations in 1944, which set up the International Monetary Fund, and required every participant to maintain its currency reserves in gold *or dollars*, so that the old familiar 'gold reserves' of each country became henceforth the 'gold and dollar reserves'. Since the US, in the years immediately after the second world war, with its accumulated monopoly hoard in Fort Knox of the great part of the capitalist world's available gold resources, could use this monopoly to keep down the dollar price of gold to the old pre-war price of $35 to the ounce fixed by President Roosevelt in 1933, while the prices of all other commodities had greatly multiplied, this meant that the available gold resources, pegged down artificially to this low valuation, became manifestly inadequate as the basis for the currency and credit structure needed to meet the requirements of international transactions and exchange at highly inflated prices. Hence by this system, inspired and controlled by the US, the dollar became the practical substitute for gold as the main basis of the currency reserves of every capitalist country, and the recognised measure of value and medium of exchange for all international transactions.

Collapse of Dollar Domination

Within the confines of this system, which found its juridical expression in Bretton Woods, and in fact reflected American initially unchallenged superiority of strength in the capitalist world in the period after 1945, a considerable expansion of world capitalist production and trade was carried forward during the quarter of a century since 1945. The real instability at the heart of this whole structure, based on the acceptance of the US-controlled currency of the dollar as the equivalent of gold, was temporarily concealed from general view. This is the system which has now crashed with President Nixon's proclamation, ending the dollar's gold convertibility, and launching the most ruthless offensive of American monopoly capitalism, with the adoption of the import surcharge and every protectionist weapon in its armoury, against rival capitalist powers. With this a whole historical epoch, the epoch of American domination in the capitalist world after the second world war, has ended, and given place to a new phase of extreme instability and contradictions.

Illusion of Capitalist Stabilisation

This phase of world capitalist development during the past quarter of a century, which found its expression in dollar domination in all the capitalist countries, came to be regarded as so firmly

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established in the first period after the second world war that many younger financial journalists, who had never lived through the era of the dollar at $20.67 to the ounce of gold, previous to Roosevelt's drastic devaluation by 41 per cent on December 15, 1933, began to accept it as an axiom that the dollar was the equivalent of gold, and to regard gold as an archaic survival. American financial and government policy exercised every effort to maintain this system, which established the dollar as statutory world currency to be a compulsory part of the currency reserves of every capitalist country, since this meant that the US could in effect create at will its own world currency in uncontrolled amounts. During this quarter of a century the US spent colossal sums overseas to invest and buy up enterprises and resources in countries all over the world, extend its special form of empire and chain of overseas bases in every continent, and conduct costly wars as in Vietnam. An increasing proportion of this vast overseas expenditure came to be paid for in the period of mounting deficits from the nineteen-fifties onwards by a book-keeping entry of phantom dollars entered as owing, which became the equivalent of gold in the currency reserves of the countries thus subjected to or voluntarily participating in this confidence trick. Such was the precarious and vulnerable basis of international capitalist relations during the very period of expansion in capitalist production and trade and apparent 'affluence' which was celebrated by apologists as the triumph of stabilisation, the 'economic miracle' of the 'new capitalism' and 'disproof of Marxism'.

Pricking of the Bubble

The unstable structure of this modern phase of world capitalism, with the mounting American dollar deficits and the parallel accumulating mountain of phantom dollars in the other capitalist countries, could not last. The inequality of capitalist development led to an increasing challenge from the other capitalist powers to American supremacy and the domination of the dollar. The US balance of payments reached a deficit from 1950 onwards, totalling 10 billion dollars during the eight years from 1950-57, and soaring to 3.9 billion in the single year 1959. From 1960 onwards the crisis of the dollar became manifest, when the free market price of gold rose to $41 per ounce, as against the statutory $35 imposed by Bretton Woods. By 1968 the attempt was made to establish a 'two-tier' structure, with central banks conducting their transactions in dollars at the official rate of $35 to the ounce of gold, alongside a free market in gold, in which the central banks undertook not to participate. But the

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US deficit in its balance of payments continued to soar from the 3.9 billion dollars in 1959 to 7 billion in 1969, 10.8 billion in 1970 and 11.5 billion in the first half of 1971. To maintain the 1933 valuation of the dollar the US poured out an increasing proportion of its gold accumulation. US gold stocks decreased from the 1949 record of 24.6 billion dollars to 10.3 billion by the end of the first half of 1971. But by the end of the first half of 1971 US debts overseas totalled 50 billion dollars, while the gold to meet them, if gold convertibility of the dollar were maintained, totalled 10.3 billion. The world banker had thus become formally bankrupt. The confidence trick was over.

President Nixon's Offensive

On August 15 President Nixon ended the gold convertibility of the dollar, just as President Roosevelt had done in March 1933. At the same time he refused to devalue the dollar, which would have meant the end of the attempt to establish the dollar as the substitute for gold. He proclaimed his determination to maintain unchanged the official rate of $35 for the ounce of gold: 'changes in the exchange rate of the dollar and other currencies (but not the official dollar rate of gold) may be anticipated.' Instead, he demanded of all other currencies to be revalued upwards so as to save the dollar from devaluation. This offensive opened the war of all against all between the rival leading countries of the capitalist world, with the mark, the yen, the franc and sterling shifting their exchange rates or afloat, and all demanding the devaluation of the dollar. The grand organiser of world capitalism after the second world war had become the grand disorganiser. The attempt to replace gold by the dollar had failed. Gold was once again revealed as the inevitable final measure of value in the anarchy of international capitalist exchange relations.

Deepening of the General Crisis of Capitalism

The familiar error of all unsuccessful war strategists has always been to devise their strategy for the next war in terms of the last war. In the same way the familiar error of all the capitalist economists and reformist apologists is to devise their economic strategy to anticipate and prevent the crisis of capitalist economy in terms of what happened last time. So their vision in the whole post-war period has been concentrated on the memory of the world economic crisis of 1929-33. Because the successive cyclical crises after the second world war never reached the scale of that searing experience, they have for

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years sought to proclaim the triumphant viability of the 'new capitalism' and the elimination of crises, until the scale of the present 'recession' (blessed word) drawing towards one million unemployed in Britain and six million in the US, has begun to give them pause and lessen the confidence of their assertions. But what they have failed to realise is that, while the basic general crisis of capitalism has developed continuously since the first world war and the opening of the socialist revolution, the particular forms in which the contradictions break out are ceaselessly new, and never a mere repetition of a previous phase. The international currency crisis is the present visible symptom of the deepening of the crisis of capitalism. But the symptom is the warning signal, not the disease.

War of All Against All

Through the forms of this currency crisis all the leading capitalist powers have been involved in open conflict. Japan, previously the apparent docile satellite of the US, has conducted a ferocious battle against what its spokesmen have described as Nixon's 'Pearl Harbour'. The Common Market Six have found their main members pursuing different paths, with the mark afloat alongside the Dutch guilder (and the Austrian schilling), while the representatives of the franc have expressed their disapproval of floating, and demanded fixed exchange rates, free from dependence on the dollar and related to gold. Only with difficulty the Common Market Finance Ministers reached a compromise formula at the meeting at Brussels on September 13 to demand devaluation of the dollar and a new alignment of currencies, with phasing out of the dollar as a reserve currency. Even Britain, which had always sought to pride itself on maintaining the special relationship of sterling to the dollar, finally joined with the other non-dollar countries to present the demand for the devaluation of the dollar at the meeting of the Group of Ten. The International Monetary Fund, in which the US up to the present had the decisive voice as well as veto, came out in opposition to President Nixon in demanding the devaluation of the dollar. The meeting of the Finance Ministers of the Group of Ten ended in deadlock on September 16, with the Nine lining up against the US in demanding devaluation of the dollar, and Connally maintaining angry resistance. The situation is fluid and moves from day to day, so that any present analysis of trends is likely to be out-dated by the time it is read. There is no doubt that every effort will be made to patch up some kind of truce and new agreed alignment of currencies. But the present battle is fierce, and the solution will not be easily reached. The era of the

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domination of the dollar as the supposed substitute for gold has vanished forever.

Illusions of Gold as 'Archaic'

Understanding of this international currency crisis is obscured in most current non-Marxist comment, since it is treated as *only* a currency crisis in isolation from the crisis of capitalism which gives rise to it. Hence all the economists of capitalism and high priests of reformism busy themselves with seeking the alchemist's dream of an ideal 'international currency' which shall not be subject to the vicissitudes of the dollar or tied to any such base and unsatisfactory earthly object as gold, but shall ride high above the conflicts of national interests as the universally agreed and accepted international medium of exchange. Keynes was feeling after this aim when he proposed the creation of the 'Bancor' at Bretton Woods, but the US vetoed this, since it was determined that the dollar should be the international currency. The realities of capitalist interests cut across the dreams of the ideologist, however much his aim might have been to serve capitalism. The device of 'special drawing rights' in connection with the International Monetary Fund has been presented as a step towards this aim of an 'international currency'. Along these lines it is suggested that a solution may be found to the present currency crisis. Denunciations of gold as 'archaic' for modern purposes of international financial and commercial relations have become a commonplace of current controversy.

Dreams of an 'International Currency'

Gold is dismissed as an obsolete superstition, 'irrelevant' and wholly inadequate for the requirements of modern international transactions. Besides, it is pointed out as an additional objection that the recognition of gold as the international measure of value and medium of exchange, instead of some agreed 'international currency' established by treaty, confers a special benefit on the two states with the main gold resources, South Africa and the Soviet Union. So the chorus sounds on every side denouncing the role of gold and calling for the establishment of a new 'international currency'. The Labour Party financial expert, Harold Lever, has castigated the 'traditionalist lust for gold', and described gold as an 'irrelevant metal'. The Financial Editor of the *Guardian*, William Davis, has trounced across seven columns 'The Solid Gold Illusion'. Unfortunately the 'illusion' rests with those who imagine that an ideal currency can be established independent of real value. In a world of

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independent capitalist states the role of gold as the final measure of value and ultimate regulator of settlements in international transactions has developed and exists precisely because it is independent of any particular State and has its own value. This role cannot be fulfilled by a token without independent value, and dependent for acceptance solely on a convention or treaty between States or central banking institutions, subject to all the transient currents of a ceaselessly changing world.

Why Gold?

Nobody invented gold to be set up by some international convention as a measure of value or medium of exchange. At different stages of social development all kinds of commodities have fulfilled this role, like the oxen in Homer. But whatever commodity is used has to have its own value as a commodity in order to be used as a universal equivalent expressing the values of all commodities, and eventually taking the form of money. For the plain practical reasons found in every elementary textbook gold, sometimes with silver as an auxiliary, came to fulfil this role as the most convenient, durable, not too bulky or heavy, capable of being minted, etc. For the nineteenth century citizen in the age of golden sovereigns there could be no mystery. But for anyone below the age of 60 today, for whom money means paper, and gold is only an ornamental decoration for artistic objects (the possession of gold as such by a private citizen is now illegal) the conception of gold as money may well seem an antiquated survival from past ages.

Gold and Paper

The issue of paper tokens for currency by a State is not new; it was done by China many centuries ago. Britain issued paper money during the Napoleonic Wars. At all times on the narrow base of gold a mountain of paper has been erected, in the form of notes, cheques, letters of credit, bills of exchange and the like for the requirements of financial and commercial transactions. But what was new since 1914, expressing the breakdown of the old classic capitalism and opening the general crisis, was the abolition of gold as money for the private citizen in the main warring European states and substitution of an *irredeemable* paper currency. The validity of this paper currency was dependent on the State which issued it; it represented no independent value. But once the State, under conditions of war emergency, had resort to the printing press to issue money in uncontrolled

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amounts, the temptation to extend the use of this magic panacea of the printing press (in other words, for the State to forge money) proved irresistible. Inflation ran riot in all the European warring countries in varying degrees, followed after the war by savage counter-measures, successive waves of deflation and inflation, abandonment of old paper currencies to substitute new paper currencies, and all the mad dance we have experienced and continue to experience. Inflation, despite all the vows of all the political leaders of all the capitalist countries throughout these years to combat it, continues today as the scourge of all working people, compelling the ceaseless fight for higher wages to overtake or anticipate spiralling prices, systematically expropriating small savers and robbing those with low incomes, and providing fantastic profits for wealthy property owners and speculators. But while the validity of the paper currency of a particular State depends on the strength of that State and its acceptance by the people, it has no independent value beyond that range, and in the balance of international transaction the final reckoning is in gold. Bretton Woods tried to transform the old familiar gold reserves into the recent 'gold and dollar reserves'; but this has now broken down.

Theories of Ultra-Imperialism

But could not some 'international currency', free from the instability of separate national interests and currencies, be established by agreement between the leading capitalist powers, for example by the Group of Ten? This is the aspiration to which all the would-be organisers of a harmonious capitalism have been elaborating their multifarious schemes. Certainly. In theory, if there were a world State of capitalism, it could issue a world currency which would have validity throughout the range of that world State, and the stability of that currency would depend on the stability of the economy of that world State. But there is no world State of capitalism. The dream of a world State of capitalism is the old dream of ultra-imperialism. There is no doubt that the whole trend of capitalism is towards larger and larger aggregations, combinations, concentrations, supra-national integration; and the logic of this, if carried forward in a straight line, would lead eventually to a single combination drawing in the whole world of capitalism or a world State of capitalism. But, as Lenin pointed out, before this theoretical ultimate goal is reached, the path to it lies through such conflicts, struggles to the death between rival monopoly capitalist powers, between imperialist rulers and subject peoples advancing to national liberation, and

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between classes that, before the final goal of ultimate concentration in a single world State of capitalism is reached, the conditions will have ripened for the victory of socialism and national liberation, capitalism will have given place to socialism. The characteristic direction of effort of the modern imperialist powers towards world unification lies, not through international agreement and harmony, but through each successively stronger imperialist power striving to establish its domination over the others—at one time British imperialism, subsequently German imperialism, and in the modern period US imperialism.

'Almost Unnoticed'

With his invariable facility for living in an economist's dream-world of myths until hindsight suddenly brings him belatedly to discover with astonishment the facts of life, Professor Kaldor in a recent feature article in the *Times* of September 6, on 'The Sea Change of the Dollar' announced his discovery of a 'relatively minor technical feature . . . almost unnoticed at the time' in the Bretton Woods Agreement of the capitalist powers. After describing how 'the Bretton Woods Agreement ushered in a period of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in the world' he continued:

> For the creation of this climate neither the institutions nor the rules were primarily responsible, but a relatively minor technical feature of the arrangement which passed almost unnoticed at the time—a by-product of Bretton Woods, which was not even made explicit in the treaty. This was the rule which made the United States dollar the universal single 'intervention currency' of IMF members.

Holy innocence of the dear Professor. He only missed the whole point of Bretton Woods, which was sufficiently obvious to the coarse business world, that it established the supremacy of the dollar in the capitalist world by making the dollar the statutory equivalent of gold, to be accepted as such by all the signatory capitalist countries with the compulsory obligation that they maintain their currency reserves henceforth as gold and dollar reserves. If the dear Professor never noticed this at the time, he can hardly escape noticing it now when he sees the ferocious tenacity with which Nixon and Connally in all the wrangles of the Group of Ten fight to resist the demands of the other capitalist powers for the devaluation of the gold price of the dollar, because to surrender this would be to surrender their magic weapon of the statutory unchangeable equivalence of the dollar to gold enshrined in the Bretton Woods Agreement.

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Ultra-Imperialism and the US Drive to World Domination

The path of development of imperialism, in its striving towards ultra-imperialism, has proceeded in living historical practice, not through harmony and unification agreements, but through the striving of a stronger imperialist power to impose its supremacy on the other imperialist powers. This has been demonstrated in the modern period by the striving of US imperialism towards world domination. Before the first world war the US had already outstripped its rivals in industrial production, but was still financially a debtor and had to recognise the financial supremacy of London. The first world war transformed this situation, bringing fantastic profits to the US, which delayed direct entry until the last, and emerged as the world's largest creditor with a financial stranglehold on the war-devastated European capitalist countries. From this point the conscious drive developed towards world domination, as Ambassador Page's diaries revealed. President Wilson declared: 'We have got to finance the world . . . and those who finance the world . . . must rule it.' But he was too impatient in endeavouring to give juridical form to this American leadership in his conception of the League of Nations with the US President as President of the League. Under the cover of 'isolationism' the US finance-capitalists built up their strength in order then to extend their tentacles of penetration and domination through the machinery of the Dawes Plan and US-financed 'stabilisation'. By 1930 the American publicist Ludwell Denny was declaring in his book *America Conquers Britain*: 'What chance has Britain against America? Or what chance has the world?' But the world economic crisis dealt a shattering blow to this early drive of US imperialism towards domination in the capitalist world.

Rise and Fall of the US Drive to World Domination

It was the holocaust of the second world war which created the conditions to sweep forward this US expansionist offensive on a scale never before equalled. Once again US finance-capitalists piled up fantastic profits in the war and emerged with overwhelming superiority of strength in the capitalist world and new dreams of invincible world power. The first decade after 1945 saw the extension of US economic, financial and military penetration throughout the non-socialist world to establish a new type of far-flung empire extending over the widest range of countries, and finding formal expression in the statutory domination of the dollar throughout the capitalist world. But the past decade saw the increasing contradictions undermining this structure, and the rising resistance of the majority

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of capitalist states, now grown in relative strength, to this subordination to the dollar in international financial affairs. So has followed the collapse of the dollar which has now taken place. This is not the end of the story. The collapse of the dollar has given rise to the ferocious Nixon offensive to build up US competitive strength and restore dollar supremacy, the resistance of the other capitalist powers to this offensive, and the open battle now in progress. The dream of harmony of the 'new capitalism' and of the 'disproof of Marxism' has received once again a shattering blow. The whole experience of the entire modern period has demonstrated the increasing instability of capitalism. All the more marked is the contrast of the advancing strength of socialism, which, even while full account has to be taken of the accompanying problems of growth, has once again shown its immunity to the storms of the present currency crisis of the capitalist world as it showed immunity to the world economic crisis of capitalism four decades ago.

3. WORLD IN MOVEMENT

The new phase of the international situation has opened an extending series of rapid moves and new shifts and orientations in world power relations. The Nixon offensive of August 15, ending the gold convertibility of the dollar and opening the offensive of the imports surcharge, was an integral part of a wide reorientation of US policies to meet the new conditions. Three landmarks have signalised this new orientation. First, the influential publication of extracts from the previously secret Pentagon Report in 47 volumes directly discrediting the record of Nixon's predecessors and previous strategic policies. Second, Nixon's declaration of July 15 to abandon the old policy on China and announcing his projected visit to Peking, arranged by the secret mission of Kissinger to Peking for conversations with Chou En-lai. Third, the economic offensive of August 15, with its aggressive point directed against the capitalist countries of Europe and Japan.

President Nixon and China

In relation to China all progressive opinion has fought throughout these 22 years for the international rights of the Chinese People's Republic, and welcomes the prospect of the recognition of China's rightful place in the United Nations. But President Nixon and his associates, engaged in pursuit of reactionary aggressive aims of

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American imperialist strategy in key areas of the world have not been actuated by these progressive considerations in revising US policy on China. It is sufficiently evident and recognised by all observers that they have based their calculations on the current trends of the present rulers of China rebuffing the Soviet proposals for Soviet-Chinese friendship and co-operation and the unity of the world socialist camp, and expressing hostility to the present regime in the Soviet Union, to the majority of socialist countries and the majority of communist parties. The hard-headed architects of US strategic policy in association with President Nixon have found encouragement for these calculations underlying their new orientation of policy in relation to China in such signs as the very cordial Chinese diplomatic support for General Yahya, the US-financed butcher of the democratic struggle of the people of Bangla Desh; the increase of financial support to President Nimeiry immediately after the shocking execution of Sudanese communists and patriots; or the peculiar insistence on excluding French communist parliamentarians from an official French parliamentary delegation to Peking. Hence the role of China in the sphere of international relations will necessarily be judged by actions. The earnest wishes of all supporters of socialism and peace will be for the full friendship and co-operation of all socialist countries to fulfil their indispensable role in the wide framework of international co-operation.

Dangers and Positive Trends

The hotbeds of dangerous confrontation in the world are more critical than ever. In Indo-China all the American professions of the aim of withdrawal have been in fact accompanied by intensified aggressive action, bombardment and devastation, and failure so far to reply to the seven-point peace plan of the South Vietnam Provisional Revolutionary Government, which has won the support of the widest sections of American opinion. In the Middle East the explosive situation is manifest; and the path to a political solution is endangered by the US financial and arms supplies to the belligerent forces dominant in Israel which have refused to surrender the fruits of aggression, as well as by the menace to Arab anti-imperialist unity through the actions of US-encouraged reactionary elements in the ruling forces in the Arab states striking blows in the name of anti-communism against the unity of all the popular anti-imperialist forces. Nevertheless these undoubted critical danger points in the present international situation should not conceal from view the dominant positive trends and significant initial victories and achieve-

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ments which are being made possible by the advancing strength of socialism and the democratic progressive forces of the peoples. The Four Power accord on West Berlin has opened the way to a European Security Conference, the recognition of the two German states in the United Nations and the advance towards the prospect of a new peaceful future in Europe, with the significance of Chancellor Brandt's visit to Moscow and the visit of First Secretary Brezhnev to Paris. The Soviet-Egyptian Treaty is a powerful influence for a political solution in the Middle East in accordance with the United Nations resolutions and the anti-imperialist aspirations of the Arab people, as well as the true interests of the ordinary people of Israel. The Soviet-Indian Treaty is a powerful influence for peace in Asia. All these new developments in the international situation will require further review; and since consideraions of space have compelled their being held over in view of urgent importance to concentrate on the immediate issues of the dollar crisis, it will be necessary to return in future comments to these further aspects of the developing new international situation.

R.P.D.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY GREETING

Since the publication of the fourth selection of Golden Jubilee greetings in our September issue, a further message has been received:

JÁNOS KÁDÁR
First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

'Entrusted by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, I salute with sincere respect and fraternal appreciation *Labour Monthly*, tempered in the class struggles of the past half century, now celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. The history of *Labour Monthly* attests that British Marxists advocating social justice in defence of the democratic rights of the working people for profound social changes, against capitalist exploitation, have always found associates among the committed fighters of the written word. We, Hungarian Communists, highly appreciate the struggle waged by your journal for the benefit of the British working class, the entire international movement and communist movement. We are especially grateful to your journal for the attention and support often and effectively rendered to the progressive forces of Hungary, enhancing their fight. We sincerely wish that *Labour Monthly* will continue to defend and explain with true Marxist dedication and at a high ideological level the principles of Marxism-Leninism, of proletarian internationalism, and will unswervingly expose capitalist monopoly, the common enemy of every working man and woman, and enhance the victory of social justice. Sending wishes to all members of the editorial board and every co-worker of the journal to have much success and good health in this magnificent and highly responsible work.'

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Labour Party Conference

UNEMPLOYMENT ISSUE SUPREME

Sid Bidwell MP

AS we come to the opening of the Labour Party Conference it is difficult to lift out one single issue above everything else of national or international importance. But this year our task is made tragically easier: I believe unemployment is the question supreme as Tory Government policy takes us inexorably to a million idle workers. Unemployment and all its dangers for our people in and out of work challenges the whole labour movement and should receive maximum attention at the Conference.

This means both observation of the reality, and determination to fight the Tories every inch of the way. The right to work—the same as saying the right to live—is thoroughly understood by the whole working class including the UCS workers and their magnificent leaders. It is on this issue that Tory power can be destroyed.

To be sure there is the outstanding historical matter of Tory terms for accession to the 1957 Treaty of Rome. And there has been a special July Labour conference. Had Harold Wilson taken his anti-Market lead at the beginning of that conference instead of at the end, the decision would have already been taken to oppose. Even so the Party EC has stepped into the breach and the campaign against the Government on this score is underway.

No matter how many heads are counted in Parliament in favour when re-assembly takes place after October 18, the working class is clearly opposed. If the political leadership is determined enough on all the subsequential legislation required to conform to the European Economic Community, the parliamentary fight should be formidable. But the weight, as always, of real opposition to the Tories lies in the country and especially in the trade union movement. If the whole opposition is big enough in and out of Parliament, events should make it impossible to enter against the will of the people, and the call for a general election should become irresistible.

But what of unemployment? I believe it is the key to all Tory strategy. On the Common Market, attacks on the people's social and medical services, on milk and meals for children of the working class at school, and against a better deal for old age pensioners, the bulwark of opposition is, as ever, the unions and their politically

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conscious leaders. Unemployment to any fundamental degree (as now) is a great weakening factor.

It is soul-destroying to be a poverty stricken pensioner, as it is to be a homeless family or a mother amidst the Irish terror, but there is the special deep feeling of the unwanted skilled worker. From our experiences of mass unemployment of the thirties, in spite of heroic counter-action by the brilliant Wal Hannington and those who organised the hunger marches, we all know how it sapped the courage and morale of those in work. The whip-hand is soon taken advantage of by the big employers who know in concert with one another that they can more easily attack working conditions won by years of struggle.

Greater numbers of young people in Northern Ireland, in Scotland, in the North East are leaving school to face unemployment. In the relatively high employment areas such as the Midlands and the South-East including the London area, workers are now fearful of redundancy. As an MP representing a large number of people of Indian origin within my constituency, unemployment has always been my very great fear. Many Tories have always sensed the possibilities of divide and rule on the race question. There would be an easy way of creating working class division if coloured workers had good jobs and any numbers of white workers in the areas mostly concerned were out of work.

Yet, while as socialists and communists and internationalists we look back and around us in these apprehensive times, we must sense that as history looks like repeating itself, it never entirely does so. There is now a whole generation of young people making new experiences. Their fibre has not been sapped by the ravages of recent war and wholesale slump. I have optimism on their fighting ability. The facts are that a full-employment capitalist boom with a shortage of labour runs into collision with the market forces of labour power supply and demand. In other words capitalist power must rest on an unemployment margin enough to keep the market sweet for their purposes. Yet, there is reason to believe that they are unhappy when unemployment runs at current levels.

The world-wide blizzard of the thirties taught many lessons both to socialists and those who have a heavy stake in the preservation of capitalism. You do not easily destroy the self-confidence of the British working class and its trade union movement. In the end the people as a whole will see that there is more sense within the trade unions not only in particular industries but concerning the running of the national economy. The Heath Government over wide reaches

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is now thought of—to use a phrase of the late Nye Bevan—as 'lower than vermin'.

The task for the Labour leadership in getting rid of Tory Government is made relatively that much easier. But the calibre of that leadership is part determined by the urgency they themselves see in getting the Tories out. Their sense is also part determined by their desires and lack of them to operate socialist policies for national revival when once more office is in their hands. This year's Labour Conference will show how far socialist determination has moved from the rank-and-file activists into the heart of the leadership.

Wasting human beings who want to work is, by itself, such a wholesale condemnation of capitalist society that large numbers could be won to socialist remedies. If Conference does not rise to this opportunity it will have failed the pioneers of the movement.

Labour Party Conference

LABOUR AND THE COMMON MARKET

Ralph Millner

THE Labour Party Conference this month has a magnificent opportunity to strengthen the fight against Britain's entry into the Common Market. By its decisions it can do much to clear away the uncertainty and confusion that have resulted from Mr Wilson's manoeuvres at the Special Conference on the Common Market held on July 17, and carry the fight forward into a new and more hopeful phase.

The National Executive, on July 28, decided by 16 votes to six, to put forward at Brighton the resolution opposing entry on the terms negotiated by the Tory Government, and demanding a general election now*. The Executive's decision was taken only after a bitter struggle, however, and it is useful to examine the details of what happened at the Special Conference, and the unfortunate results that have followed.

When the Conference met, an overwhelming majority of votes against entry had already been cast at trade union conferences, and if the issue had been put to the vote, there can be no doubt that

* On the same day the TUC General Council formulated its resolution against entry on those terms, because it 'would not be advantageous to the British people'. Congress passed this resolution last month by an overwhelming majority.

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there would have been a resounding 'No'. Mr Wilson, ably assisted by Mr Callaghan, avoided that result: how did he do it? The device used was a simple one. The platform proposed that the Conference should not vote on the issue of entry, but should function merely as a 'take note' conference; and by careful lobbying amongst union delegates before the meeting, support on this procedural question was obtained even from certain unions which were on record against the Common Market and would therefore have been bound to vote against entry.

The largest of these unions was the National Union of Mineworkers, with 304,000 votes; at its conference on July 8 the vote against entry had been unanimous. The Post Office Workers' Union, with 182,000 votes, also gave its support to the procedural motion, although its delegates were under instruction to vote against entry. The Public Employees, and the Transport Salaried Staffs, also supported the platform on the procedural question, although their votes would have had to be cast against entry. In all, a potential majority of about four million votes against entry into the Common Market was thus blocked, and the procedural motion was carried by 3,185,000 to 2,624,000. The Engineers, the Transport and General Workers, the Print workers, and some others, remained firm, and voted against the procedural proposal, but their numbers were not sufficient to compel a vote on the basic issue.

The effect of this successful—although foolish—manoeuvre by Mr Wilson was not merely to defer a decision until this month's Labour Party Conference. It gave encouragement and new strength to the pro-Marketeers inside the labour movement, and has resulted in a weakening of the struggle against the Tories in the intervening period. The capitalist press immediately saw what the effect of Mr Wilson's momentary 'triumph' was going to be. The *Observer*'s political commentators wrote: 'An adverse vote at yesterday's conference would have made it more difficult for leading pro-Marketeers such as Mr Roy Jenkins, Labour's deputy leader, to continue their fight for British entry' (July 18). Similarly, an article in the *Times* described the platform's procedural success as 'a great blow' to the opponents of entry, and pointed out that if there had been a vote against entry the efforts of the pro-Marketeers 'would have been overshadowed' (July 26).

Mr Wilson thus threw away an opportunity of showing the Labour Party united on this important question, with himself in a firm position of leadership; and there followed the unseemly spectacle of a Parliamentary Labour Party openly split on the

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question of the Common Market, at its meeting on July 19, and the next day Mr Wilson making a somewhat pompous speech about his position as leader, with a pathetic appeal for the unity which he himself had done so much to weaken.

That was not all. The capitalist press lost no time in 'down-grading' Mr Wilson. In the *Sunday Times*, commenting on the Special Conference and the unhappy week of squabbling which followed it, Ronald Butt wrote: 'It was not exactly skilful of Mr Wilson to leave the Marketeers free to make their case, uninhibited by a conference decision' (July 25). Meantime, the *Daily Telegraph* had presented Labour's leading pro-Marketeer as a kind of hero: 'In a very real sense Mr Roy Jenkins spoke for Britain with historic resonance when he faced unabashed the Parliamentary Labour Party with its majority of anti-Marketeers' (July 21).

That was the state of affairs when the Executive decided upon its anti-Market resolution for Brighton. Mr Wilson supports the resolution, and the question arises why he created such an unfavourable situation by his performance at the Spcial Conference of July 17. One reason may be that he likes to keep his options open. More important, probably, is his aversion to being told by the organised workers what his political line is to be. At the TUC the organised workers have stated their view, however; and now, at the Labour Party Conference, they have a further opportunity. There are two demands which socialists opposing entry are likely to make:

1. That Conference shall oppose entry into the Common Market and call for a general election now; and—

2. That the next Labour Government shall be pledged to bring Britain out of the Market if the Tory Government manages to take us in.

Powerful arguments for these two demands are presented in a very effective pamphlet by Ron Bellamy*, which gives abundant ammunition for delegates to the Labour Party Conference and all participating in this key controversy. No less useful for delegates and all concerned is the invaluable factual analysis of the costs of entry published by the Labour Research Department†.

On the question of entry, clearly there is every reason for complete unity between those who oppose it on the terms accepted by the Tories, and those who are against it on any terms. The demand for a pledge that Labour would undo the work of the Tories is likely to meet some opposition, however.

* *The Common Market: the Tory White Paper Exposed*, by Ron Bellamy. *Communist Party*, 24 pp., 7p.

† *The Common Market: What Would Entry Mean? Labour Research Department*, 24 pp., 10p.

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The Prime Minister made two observations about this matter at a meeting on July 14. He said that the 'spectre' of a future Labour Government withdrawing Britain from the Common Market had been raised, but added: 'I have never seen it expressed officially as a decision of the Labour Party or the Labour Party Executive' (*Times*, July 15). The Conference at Brighton can speedily remedy that omission, whatever attempts may be made to prevent it giving Mr Heath the firm answer that his remark obviously calls for.

As for Mr Heath's further observation—'It would be a serious matter for any British government to say that it repudiates a treaty signed by its predecessors'—that is a red herring. The British people have never had an opportunity to express their opinion through the ballot box on the question of entry into the Common Market, and if Mr Heath is such an ardent constitutionalist let him declare a general election, and fight it on this issue, which is of such grave importance for Britain's future.

There is another red herring that is being dragged out, as it always is by the Tories and the right wing, whenever the organised labour movement shows that it is on its metal, knows what it wants, and is beginning to feel its strength. This is the argument that the Parliamentary Labour Party is under no obligation to act in accordance with the policies decided upon by the Labour Party outside Parliament. As a *Times* editorial pointed out, on the eve of the Special Conference of July 17, it is 'traditional' for the PLP to refuse to be controlled by Labour Party Conferences, adding: 'The attempt to dictate to Parliament from outside Parliament is naturally resented.'

This attitude of the PLP reminds one of what Engels once called 'parliamentary cretinism'—'a disorder which penetrates its unfortunate victims with the solemn conviction that the whole world, its history and future, are governed and determined by a majority of votes in that particular representative body which has the honour to count them amongst its members . . .' (*The Triumph of Prussia*, 27 vii. 1852).

What is the basic principle here? For over two hundred and fifty years the workers have been building up the labour movement, to fight for the interests of *their* class, not those of the capitalists. They have selected, nominated, worked for, and succeeded in getting elected Members of Parliament for the same purpose, i.e. to fight for *their* class, inside Parliament as elsewhere. They have organised, so as to be able to arrive at collective decisions on matters affecting them, and to have the strength to carry them out. At the

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general election candidates will be keen enough to display the Labour banner, as they canvass for votes: the Party is therefore entitled, having decided its policy, to state categorically what it expects of anyone—and everyone—who stands for election to Parliament under that banner.

Conference is in a position to make this point clear both to Mr Wilson *and* Mr Roy Jenkins.

ANGELA DAVIS: WHOSE TRIAL?

Bettina Aptheker*

ANGELA DAVIS has been in jail now for one year—denied bail. Her trial is imminent. Despite the long months of solitary confinement her spirits are good, and her thoughts are only of freedom and the struggle.

Through her articles and appeals and legal presentations in court as co-counsel she has continued to expose in meticulous detail the plight of all political prisoners—victims of national and racial oppression and the war in Indo-China, the institutionalised racism of the judicial system, the savage brutality of the prisons. It was precisely Miss Davis's tireless commitment to the Soledad Brothers and her involvement in the mass movement which was beginning to attack the archaic, racist and inhuman prison system that specifically occasioned the frame-up charges against her.

Calmly and methodically questioning a Marin County judge a few weeks ago, Miss Davis, acting as her own lawyer, elicited some extraordinary responses, clearly confirming our contentions as to the basically racist character of the court system. This judge, *who selected the grand jury which indicted Miss Davis*, testified that he would not recommend a Black Panther or a Communist for the grand jury. He told the court he selected grand jury members who had 'common sense, good citizenship and some intelligence'. He said that the Panthers 'could hardly have good citizenship when they spew violence, hatred and murder all over.'

Just days before the murder of George Jackson by San Quentin prison guards, Miss Davis, in a statement to the National Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, again warned of

*Bettina Aptheker, who writes from San Jose, California, is co-editor with Angela Davis of the book *If They Come in the Morning*, to be published this month by Orbach & Chambers.

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the state's intention to claim the lives of the three Soledad Brothers:

> The scenario for the conviction of the Soledad Brothers has already been composed. Some chief props were recently unveiled. A bullet-proof plexiglass barrier, constructed expressly for the trial, will separate spectators from voluntary and involuntary actors. This is a mockery of the notion of judicial fairness, for what juror can be impartial under such circumstances?

She urged the intensification of the mass campaign to free the Soledad Brothers, the only way this 'repressive mechanism can be jammed'.

The murder of George Jackson unleashed a reign of terror inside San Quentin's so-called Adjustment Centre where still other political prisoners are now awaiting trial. The National United Committee to Free Angela Davis, affirming its deepest principles, organised a massive week-long vigil outside the gates of the prison to secure the lives of the brothers inside—brothers Ruchell Magee, Fleeta Drumgo, John Clutchette, Hugo Pinell and many others.

Since the alleged abortive escape by George Jackson—a ploy well-known in fascist countries to execute revolutionary leaders—the struggle to free Angela Davis and all political prisoners has assumed new dimensions and an even greater urgency. For the *extra-legal* murder of the people's leaders is typically fascistic and suggests the degree to which the fascist thrust is being consolidated in the United States.

It has been historically true that Black people have been the first victims of repression, and always the most deeply wounded by it. This flows directly from the fact that racism—the oppression of Black people—is and always has been organic to the political economy of American capitalism. It is precisely for this reason that the Black Liberation Movement exercises its key role in the radical-democratic and revolutionary movement in the country.

Angela Davis typifies this reality. She is symbolic of every significant arena of struggle in the United States—Black liberation, opposition to the war in Indo-China, the fight for academic freedom and constitutional liberties, the freedom of political prisoners, the liberation of women, the fight for socialism. Her defense therefore embraces every significant social movement and emerges as a pivotal case through which many future events will be determined.

If this was true before the summary execution of George Jackson—and it was—it is even more true today. As if to confirm that view, the contours of the Government's strategy for conviction have come clearly into focus: to maintain a level of racist hysteria, to sustain, by any means necessary, a presumption of guilt, in order that the trial proceed as a mere formality to confirm *a priori* culpability. For if

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there is a *real* trial, if due process is accorded Angela Davis, if she is finally released on bail—in short, if the presumption of innocence can be restored—the clarity of her appeal and the truth she will expose will make conviction extremely difficult.

Angela Davis. Twenty-seven. Black. Communist. Teacher. Philosopher-Activist. Political Prisoner. She is the living embodiment of Marx's fundamental thesis:

> Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

In such a way is her life bound up with the lives of all oppressed and exploited people. Of her trial she writes:

> I am charged with three capital offences—murder, kidnapping and conspiracy. My life is at stake in this case—not simply the life of a lone individual but a life which belongs to Black people who are tired of poverty and racism and the unjust imprisonment of tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters. *It is this life, organically bound up with the lives of all the millions who* struggle for freedom and justice . . . which stands to be extinguished by the State of California.

Only the most massive, militant, uncompromising international movement, led by the working people and the national liberation movements and embracing every progressive political tendency, can win the freedom of Angela Davis and through that struggle deliver a decisive blow to the US ruling clique, and to the fascist elements within it, now consolidating their forces.

LABOUR MONTHLY FIFTY YEARS AGO

There is all the difference in the world between driving an old locomotive (a Government is essentially a locomotive) and inventing and constructing an aeroplane. And there is the same difference between operating the established capitalist system, and devising, setting up and administering the political, legal and industrial machinery proper to socialism. Until this is done, no admission of labour leaders, socialists, communists, or Bolshevists into Parliament or even into the cabinet can establish socialism or abolish capitalism. Mr Henderson and Mr Clynes may be just as anti-capitalist as Messrs Trotsky and Lenin; but they can no more make our political machine produce socialism than they can make a sewing machine produce fried eggs. It was not made for that purpose; and those who work it, though they may stand out for better wages and treatment for the workers, and perhaps get them, are still working the capitalist machine, which will not produce anything else but capitalism. The notion that we have in the British constitution a wonderful contrivance, infinitely adaptable to every variation in the temper of the British people, is a delusion. You might as well say that the feudal system was an exquisite contrivance adaptable to the subtlest nuances of the cotton exchange of Manchester. (From 'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat', by Bernard Shaw, *Labour Monthly*, October 1921)

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HONOUR TO I

May 10, 1901-

THE loss of John Desmond Bernal has taken from our midst one of the great historic figures of our time.

The universal range of his genius and active life would recall, alongside his close associate Joliot-Curie, the example of such heroes of the renaissance as Leonardo da Vinci.

In the world of science he was in the forefront of the creative pioneering research and discoveries, and in stimulating research and discoveries, which have brought the startling modern developments in the use of X-ray analysis to unlock the secrets of the constitution of matter, of the atom and atomic energy and of life.

For him science was never separate from life and man's social existence. His Irish origin had already given him national-revolutionary understanding. The victory of the socialist revolution in 1917 enlarged his horizon to reach Marxism and bring him to a clear understanding of social forces, of the future of socialism and of the role of the Soviet Union, which never weakened in his firm perception throughout his life. In his book *The Social Function of Science*, published in 1939, he wrote: 'The full development of science in the service of humanity is incompatible with capitalism.'

For him this social understanding was no armchair theory. His whole life combined theory with action. During the thirties he was active in the foundation of the Association of Scientific Workers, as well as in a host of progressive movements and activities. Following the outbreak of war in 1939 his unique expert knowledge led the authorities to enlist his help for combating air-raid damage and for the de-fusing of bombs. Following 1941 he became Scientific Advisor to the Chief of Combined Operations, and took an active part in the research preparations for the Second Front, undertaking personal landings on the beaches of Normandy immediately before and after D-Day. By the end of the war he was occupying high official positions as Chairman of the Government's Scientific Advisory Committee, in the organisation of Unesco, and in assisting reconstruction after war damage in Britain and other countries.

But when the Western powers turned to the cold war and the preparations for nuclear war he did not hesitate to make his public stand. He played a prominent part in the foundation of the World Peace Council in Wroclaw in 1948, and at the Soviet Peace Congress in Moscow in 1949 proclaimed from the platform:

> In capitalist countries the direction of science is in the hands of those who hate peace, whose only aim is to destroy and torture people so that their own profits may be secured for some years longer.

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MOND BERNAL

tember 15, 1971

Of all the honours showered upon him during his life, no honour raised him so high in the esteem of masses of people in all countries as the denunciation which was let loose upon him from reactionary quarters over this public stand for peace and against the cold war and plans for nuclear war. The British Association refused to re-elect him to its Council, treating his stand as an attack on scientists, instead of the actual attack which it expressed against the big business interests controlling science in capitalist countries. A protest was signed by 244 leading British scientists against this action of the dominant leaders of the British Association. The United States, and in 1952 France, barred Bernal from entry.

This courageous public stand won for Bernal the affection and honour of millions all over the world. In 1953 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. He became President of the World Peace Congress in 1958, and only ill health compelled him to resign this position in 1965. Like Joliot-Curie before him he became for the whole world the living symbol of the fight for peace.

Labour Monthly is proud to join in paying honour to Bernal; for his friendship and support for our journal were outstanding from the very first number. The list of his main contributions below bears witness to the extent and range of his participation. Even from his last sick-bed he sent greetings for our Fiftieth Anniversary:

> I remember as if it were yesterday, when that first number appeared, how it impressed us in Cambridge in the disturbed days after the war as being the first clear light on the new forces that were then shaping the world. This clear light has continued to illuminate all the storm and stress of these fifty years, and given a guidance which I have found throughout invaluable. The files of these fifty years of *Labour Monthly* have become the indispensable source for every historian, present or future, of our time, and for every student who wishes to understand Marxism and the modern world. *Labour Monthly* has not only given the true record of the history of our time; it has helped to make that history. (*Labour Monthly Golden Jubilee Souvenir*).

The life and example of Desmond Bernal will inspire mankind for all the generations to come.

R.P.D.

Labour Monthly contributions by J. D. Bernal FRS included: *Engels and Science* (1935), *Psycho-Analsyis and Marxism* (1937), *The Atom—for War or Peace?* (1950), *Atom Weapons* (1950), *The Way to Peace* (1951), *Britain for Peace* (1951), *Leonardo da Vinci* (1952), *The Answer to the Hydrogen Bomb* (1953), *Einstein's Place in History* (1955), *The Bomb: Next Steps* (1961), *Faith in Man's Future* (1962), *The Brain Drain* (1964), *The Material Theory of Life* (1968).

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WHEN FAIR IS FOUL

Tom Vernon *

GOVERNMENT intentions in the White Paper, *Fair Deal for Housing*, threaten the same Tory class legislation as its hated anti-trade union Act. The victims this time are to be millions of private and council tenants and many more millions of ratepayers. The beneficiaries will be private landlords and taxpayers.

In what way the intended 'reforms' can be 'fair' never becomes clear in the White Paper. It is filled with lofty verbiage and self-commendation, which may explain the instant felicitations from 'experts' (and, naturally enough, the Tory Press) too blinded by their various theories to discern what new heavy burdens are designed for working people to furnish relief to the taxpayer. All these accept at face value the thin pretence that a new kind of subsidy for council housebuilding will of itself promote needed programmes in the areas of housing stress.

My purpose here is not to provide a simplified account of the complicated proposals put forward. This will be found in the September issue of *Labour Research* which I recommend for readers' study. My aim is to expose this Foul Deal sponsored by the financial tycoon, Peter Walker, currently operating as Minister of the Environment and thereby overlord for housing. Cunningly, the Tory screw is to be turned slowly—by phasing the rent rises for council tenants over some few years—so that annual additions to rent won't seem all that terrible and the eventual total of them not clearly perceived in advance by most of the victims. But resistance to the attack upon working class living standards must be made now, and surely will be if the real character of the 'reforms' can become widely understood. Tenants will need to organise themselves throughout the country, and fortunately for them they will have allies. The Labour Party nationally and the Parliamentary Labour Party are both firmly opposed and, I hope, will be actively supported in the constituencies. The trade unions will not fail to show their customary aid to those tenants who will show fight.

The Government's purpose is threefold. First, to 'stabilise' (and,

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* Tom Vernon is President of the National Association of Tenants and Residents, and is leader of the Labour group on his borough council.

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I think, effectively reduce) the current State expenditure on housing subsidies (£157 million in 1970-71) so that continued council housebuilding adds nothing to this; and to abolish, accordingly, all existing commitments for subsidy established by past legislation and replace them by a new *selective* subsidy costing far less. Second, to fill the gap in local councils' resources, caused by this brutal breach of faith, by compelling them to impose 'fair rents' equated with those prevailing in the private housing sector through the 1965 Rent Act machinery. Third, to smuggle into the grand plan for reform of council housing finance a quite irrelevant item, i.e. by annulling totally the old rent control and transferring 1¼ million tenants to the 'fair rents' system. Thus a nice gift to the private landlords gets across under the lulling general title of *Fair Deal for Housing*.

The first-named purpose is to be made possible by the second one. The money the Tory Government is not going to provide henceforth, as respects all new housebuilding (in accord with existing subsidy legislation), will have to come from the entire body of present and future council tenants through so-called 'fair' rents, calculated to double on average the current levels. The rent rebates (see later), to be part-financed by the State (the rest from the rate-payers), will come out of the £157 million alleged to continue to be available.

A by-product of the enforced raising of council rents by an *average* of 100 per cent (some will be much above the average), a feature odd to see in a 'fair' deal, is not only to end the so-called feather-bedding of that notorious wealthy class, the council tenants, but more importantly to increase the incentive upon tenants to become house owners through making rent uncomfortably more than mortgage costs, taking into account the tax concessions these attract. This has a more practical character than gratifying Tory ideology. It would bring more business to Tory friends in the speculative building business, and, except where council houses are sold, reduce the need to build that number of new houses for waiting list applicants.

Transferring all tenancies now rent controlled (at 1957 rents) into the rent regulated sector created by Crossman's 1965 Rent Act implements, it is true, an intention he expressed when introducing his Bill. The reason then for delay has not disappeared. The reason for this summary extinction of the old rent control can only be to gratify, and reward, Tory supporters in the private landlord business. Sole effort at justification for a present of many millions of pounds

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is the well-worn yarn that controlled rents prevent landlords from making repairs to arrest development of 'slums'. But the petty landlords (with one, maybe two, houses) do in fact account for only a quite small proportion. The big landlords are companies (not impoverished widows!) who can well afford to look after their properties still rent-controlled from the revenues they reap from the larger stocks of houses fetching market rents. The proper thing to do with the petty landlord is to enact a take-over by the municipalities of what he allegedly cannot maintain.

The primary objection to applying market rents (i.e. 'fair' rents) to houses owned by local councils, and the non-profit housing associations, is that these properties have not been held for profit-making purposes since the first of them were built. They are built as a social provision, not as a business motivated by the profit gain. 'Fair' rents for council houses will yield a profit income. What will happen to it?

In creating a surplus in the Housing Revenue Accounts (as explicitly intended) it will be utilised in either of two ways. First, it will go towards subsidising the building of new houses and to that extent reduce what the Government would have to grant (through that new creature the Rising Costs Subsidy). Second, so far as not needed for that (if at all by some councils) half of it has to be surrendered to the Exchequer! Used, nominally, by the Exchequer to finance the new kind of subsidy this is how the present £157 million will be 'stabilised', i.e. existing tentants will find the cash. This is another example of Peter Walker's conception of 'fairness'. He asserts that the lucky tenants in a surplus area should be only too happy to come to the aid of luckless ones living in the deficit areas where aid from the new Rising Costs Subsidy will be payable.

A second objection is that councils (now to be deprived of all control over their rents) will not be able to arrange for different rents fixed to suit the needs of different income classes, such as larger authorities like the Greater London Council operate. Poorest tenants will have to be allocated the worst houses, and in the worst areas, to find rents they can afford. The 'fair' rents system is a market rent system.

A prominent propaganda point about putting up the rents of some five to six million tenants is the compulsory introduction of rent rebates for council tenants and rent allowances for all others (except furnished tenants, disgracefully enough). The formula for both is the same. Both will be operated by the local councils. Rate-

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payers will have to contribute a share to the cost of each, rising to 25 per cent for rebates and 20 per cent (possibly 40 per cent in time) for allowances. (In passing, let me mention that ratepayers face yet another burden—eventually 25 per cent of the Rising Costs Subsidy and immediately 25 per cent of the Slum Clearance Subsidy. As to 'paying no rent at all' this would occur only with families almost destitute of means.

The 'fair' deal is going to face millions of decent working folk with the dilemma of undergoing a means test every six months or of refusing to endure that humiliation and paying a rent beyond their real means. The need felt by the Government to introduce these compulsory rebate and allowance schemes betrays their recognition that the new level of rents will be above the capacity of the generality of tenants—and where not so at the outset, then when the triennial reassessment of rents takes place. A proper comment on this came from such an unexpected source as the Tory MP for Epping (Norman Tebbitt) in the Commons debate on the White Paper:

> If we live in a country where that proportion of the people cannot afford the going rate for the roofs over their heads, it is not a local problem and not only a housing problem—it is a much deeper problem than that.

Because the local councils will have to contribute to the cost of rebates they will be induced to channel the poorer tenants into the lowest-rented houses (the oldest, poorly equipped and in sad old areas) because then the rent rebate would be at the minimum possible. Here's another provocation to councils to create council ghettos to match the slums as proper quarters for the poor to live in.

The massive extension of means testing—especially obnoxious to people who are not wanting benefits from the public purse but rents at a reasonable level—provokes notice to a staggering anomaly. House purchase mortgagers are getting taxation allowances now amounting to £300 million a year, averaging £60 each as compared to £39 a head for state and rate subsidies to council tenants. House owners are getting 50 per cent allowances towards the cost of improvements to their property. No means test whatever for these benefits. The wealthy treated as well as the not wealthy. The Tory advocacy of 'selectivity' (i.e. means testing) puts a Nelson eye to this anomaly.

Ratepayers' new burdens from this foul 'fair' deal go beyond the contributions already mentioned in detail above. They will have to pay the entire costs of administering the assessment of all council

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rents at the outset and then again every three years. They will have to meet the entire cost of the tremendous addition to town hall staffs to examine the means of six million tenants, who might all apply for rebates and allowances and do this afresh every six months thereafter to notify their decisions. They will also have the job of sending cash in some form to every private tenant entitled to a rent allowance certainly once a month if not every week (which it should be to be fair for once). To add in this way to non-productive work by a larger bureaucracy is entirely inflationary and a waste of human resources. All for a 'fair' deal which is nothing of the kind.

The final consideration is the question of the likelihood of the new Rising Costs Subsidy, payable on new building, promoting more housebuilding by councils than would be the case if the present subsidy system continued. I think this is very debatable. The grave falling-away from the former level of house construction (becoming worse this year and anticipated not to improve) is more due to shortage of land (especially in the stress areas in the big towns) and to its crippling price. Increasing costs of building materials and construction costs have given problems in trying to build to good standards and not go beyond the Ministry 'yard-stick' governing approval. Greatly improved though the Labour Government's sensible subsidy system was, it was not fully adequate and sometimes inhibited going ahead. But I do not think this was nearly so much of a difficulty as the other factors mentioned. As to these, the 'fair deal' cannot offer any assistance. Nothing is known of any Government proposals coming along to cope with them. In the Commons debate questions on such points of material importance got no reply. The greatest cause of difficulty in housing finance, too heavy interest, is not having any remedy yet; that would be the one thing which would transform the whole picture.

The resistance to this infamous and reactionary stroke planned by the Tories must include not only organised tenants and the allies I mentioned at the outset but the local councils themselves and, of course, Labour councils above all. Such an assembly of opponents can shake the Government and force them to retreat.

CORRECTION

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN writes: 'An unfortunate slip of memory made me write, in the August "Notes of the Month", that the Labour Government joined the Americans in setting up Seato (p. 351). It was the Tory Government which did so: the Labour Party leaders in opposition supported its action.'

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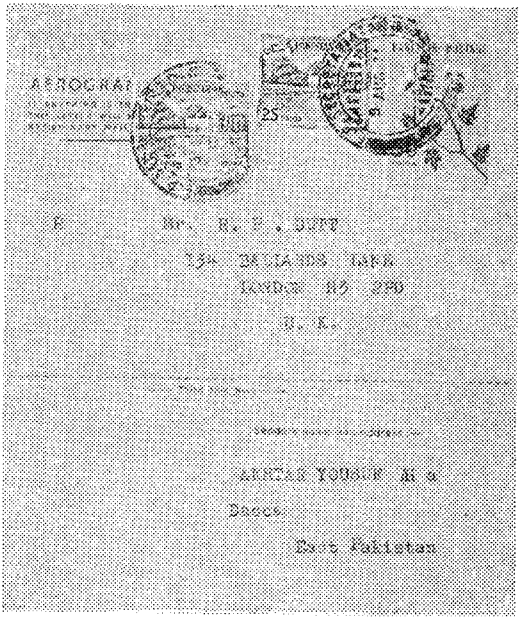
MESSAGE FROM BANGLA DESH FREEDOM FIGHTERS TO *LABOUR MONTHLY*

This airletter from freedom fighters in Bangla Desh, postmarked Dacca, August 9, reached *LM*'s office on August 17. We reproduce its message below.



We are greatly encouraged to read your article 'Pakistan—Bengal—Bangla Desh' (*LM*, June 1971). We have printed the Bengali translation of it in our new weekly *Mukti Juddho* (Liberation Struggle). It will guide the freedom fighters of Bangla Desh to have a correct and scientific outlook on their own problem. Your article will also help to mobilise world public opinion in our favour.

We thank you for expressing your solidarity with our battle against the fascist aggression of the Pakistan army. We are determined to continue our struggle until the complete defeat of the reactionary rulers of Pakistan. For the victory of our just struggle support and help of the progressive and communist forces of the world is absolutely necessary. And we hope for this support from the progressive and working people from all over the world in all possible ways.

Hopefully looking for further efforts of *Labour Monthly* to help freedom fighters of Bangla Desh—with revolutionary greetings,

THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF BANGLA DESH

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GYÖRGY LUKÁCS 1885–1971

István Friss
President, Economics Section of the
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

ON behalf of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, I take leave of György Lukács.

It is rather unusual, yet the departure of György Lukács has undoubtedly gravely afflicted the Hungarian and international working class movements, Hungarian and international scientific life, and Hungarian society as a whole. These three spheres were inseparably entwined in his life. His unusually rich and comprehensive intellect was moulded by many great minds. Two of them, Ady and Marx, both wielded an exceptional influence over him, shaping not only his intellect, but also his entire destiny. I have mentioned Ady first, because he received the first decisive impulse from Ady. He confessed to be a disciple of Hegel, yet he could never assimilate Hegel's reconciliation to reality. He felt reality to be intolerable. 'Ady's decisive influence over me reached its peak just in that.' He wrote later on 'that Ady had never, not even for a moment, acquiesced in Hungarian reality and through this to the entire reality then existing.'

He could have received this start from Marx too. All the more, because his first encounter with Marx falls at the end of his secondary school years and in his university studies. Consequently it preceded Ady. At that time, however, Marxism for Lukács was confined to political economy and first of all to 'sociology'. His next period in the study of Marx took place during the first world war, but he still did not reach the stage of truly understanding Marx. This might seem surprising, at first glance, in the case of such a receptive personality. Yet we should take into consideration that he came from a great distance, from a middle-class—moreover an upper middle-class—family, and spent his early years of adulthood in an intellectual environment involved in literature, arts and philosophy. True enough, through becoming acquainted with Ady he committed himself to the progressive, plebeian-democratic line of Hungarian history marked by Petöfi-Ady. But he came into contact with the labour movement only at the end of the world war. In December 1918 he joined the Hungarian Party of Communists. In Februrary 1919 he

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became one of the editors of *Red Paper*. During the Council-Republic (1919) he served first as People's Commissar for Public Education, then as political commissar of the Fifth Division of the Hungarian Red Army.

After the defeat of the Council-Republic, he remained in Hungary for a time, but later went to Vienna. The Horthy regime applied for his extradition, but the international solidarity movement saved him. He became committed for a lifetime in Vienna to the cause of the illegal Communist Party. 'I became a Marxist, and the decade of my intensive political activity was at the same time an epoch of intimate study and real assimilation of Marxism,' he wrote in his book, entitled *The Specifics of Aesthetics*. In 1930-31 at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow he once again profoundly studied Marx. These studies determined his subsequent social existence. He writes in one of his works in 1957:

> The study of the Marxist classics has provided me for the first time in my life with the possibility of fulfilling my aspiration, namely, to see all phenomena of the intellect as they exist in themselves, to grasp their historically systematic character in a correct contextual manner, to describe them truly and to express them according to their reality.

Speaking about the loss which has afflicted Hungarian society, I am reminded of the fact that after the second world war he had been invited—but declined to go—to Germany. Yet he was tied by many bonds to Germany. As a young scholar at Heidelberg University, he got more understanding from some significant philosophers there than in Hungary from the editors of *Nyugat* (West) and of *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century) where his works had been published. From that time onward, he wrote almost exclusively in German. German authors—Goethe, Hölderlin, Büchner, Heine—were for the most part the subjects of his excellent studies in the field of the history of literature and aesthetics published in the thirties, which elevated him at once to the ranks of leading Marxist aestheticians. Intellectually he considered it to be a coincidence that the 1918 revolution had found him in Hungary. On the other hand it was a conscious choice, and not by chance—he emphasised—that after the second world war, and one-and-a-half decades spent in the Soviet Union, he returned home in spite of his German friends' persuasion.

As a leader of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists, György Lukács undertook all the risks of struggle in illegality. In 1929, as a member of the Secretariat, he directed the Party work in Budapest for months. This was not without dangers. Horthy's police did its best to get on the track of the underground organisations. Arrests were

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becoming more and more frequent. Yet arrest meant quite a different risk for György Lukács from what it did for any other Communist. There was no doubt that if Lukács, a former leader of the Council Republic, had been caught he would have been hanged. I know from my personal experience, though, that not a trace of fear was to be detected in György Lukács's behaviour during his stay in Budapest. I was the editor of the *Communist*, the Party's underground paper, and had contact with him as such. I still remember with affection that, as a young Communist publicist, I was encouraged by such comrades as Jenö Landler and György Lukács. I never saw Lukács even nervous, although this was one of the most trying periods within his entire underground activity. Serious political differences had emerged within the Party leadership shortly before his arrival in Budapest, as a consequence of which he was removed from the Party leadership for quite some time. Soon after, he left Budapest. Having been removed from Party work, Lukács once again intimately studied Marx. He wrote later:

> While most of the leaders of the Second International regarded Marx exclusively, or at least primarily, as a revolutioniser of political economy, now we have begun to understand that with him a new epoch opened in the history of human thinking, which gained relevance and effect through Lenin's activity. The revelation that Marxian aesthetics was self-contained, original of principle, was my first step toward the understanding of the new ideological change and to its application.

The consequence of this change resulted in a series of valuable studies in the history of literature and in aesthetics. In the summer of 1931 György Lukács moved to Berlin, which he left for the Soviet Union only after Hitler came to power in 1933. In Berlin he had intensive contacts with the most outstanding representatives of progressive German literature. On his return to Moscow, he was active as a staff-member of the *Literaturny Kritik* until the paper ceased publication in 1940. After that his articles were published in the German *International Literature*—and in the Hungarian language journal *Uj Hang* (New Voice). These articles discussed Hungarian literature of the last years before the war. The tone of these publications was often incensed and passionate. This was only natural. Lukács was the first to proclaim that the necessary and desirable path toward the development of democracy in Hungary would lead to a political formation which—on the basis of Lenin's work—has been called 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'. Seeing clearly that the rulers of Hungary had plunged the people into a Fascist war in the service of Hitler, leading to disaster, he rigorously

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and passionately reminded Hungarian authors of their sacred duties towards their nation: namely to protest uncompromisingly against the war and fascism, and to serve the country's democratic transformation.

On his return to Hungary, his activity in the field of literary history and aesthetics was relegated to the background for a few years, in favour of his public activities in support of the socialist transformation of the country and of maintaining peace. But later he had the rare opportunity to set out in mature years upon the fulfilment of his youthful project: to elaborate aesthetics in a self-contained, systematised manner. His first attempt took place during his stay in Heidelberg, before the first world war. It failed. He wrote in one of his works later:

> I could think of realising my dream of youth, with an entirely different outlook and method, with a completely different content and radically inverse method, only at the beginning of the fifties.

His latest great works— *Peculiarity* and *The Specifics of Aesthetics*— have served this aim. Nevertheless Lukács's sphere of interest was not confined only to aesthetics. Ever since mastering the scientific method of Marxism, he was passionately interested in reality as it existed in the widest sense, and how this reality reflected itself in the minds of the people. Before death he had almost completed his great work on the theory of social existence. How many other plans he had yet, and with what passionate attention did he follow the development of reality, to the very end of his life!

Through outlining his social activity I have described him quite extensively as a man. Still I cannot take leave of him without mentioning one of his very remarkable human qualities: his exceptional modesty. He was fully aware of the significance and worth of his works, but he felt he was not entitled to any special, exceptional treatment from society or from his fellow men. He always showed respect and tactfulness, not only towards his family or close friends, but generally towards anyone around him, and paid maximum attention to their obligations, work or leisure.

Many people argued with him at many times. He made serious errors. He never claimed to be infallible, and criticised or rejected his previous views sharply, more than once. What was always unquestionable about him was his social-political and scientific frankness and honesty. From his very youth he had dedicated his life to the transformation and improvement of the society that he had known, that surrounded him. Once he became acquainted with Marxism-Leninism, Marx and Lenin were his lode-stars; he worked

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for the cause of human progress, and for the material and intellectual development of society.

Nowadays it is no longer disputable that he enriched the philosophical, aesthetical, socio-political, scientific thinking of our latest decades. He enriched Marxism-Leninism with new conceptions. His influence has gone far beyond the boundaries of his country. International scientific public opinion regarded him as a leading philosopher and representative of Marxism. Since his passing away, his life and work have been eulogised by very many all over the world. His nation, progressive science and the international revolutionary movement pay tribute to him now.

BRITISH SHIPBUILDING

Commander Edgar P. Young
R.N. Retired

A MOTION calling for the nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry was carried by 9,610,000 votes to nil at the meeting of the TUC in Blackpool on September 8. And high time too, for, as was pointed out by the mover of the motion, Dan McGarvey, president of the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers:

> The events on Clydeside have proved that private enterprise is incapable of solving the problems of the industry. If events are allowed to take their course, there is no guarantee that a similar disaster would not occur elsewhere.

F. A. Baker, of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, who seconded the motion, drew attention to the fact that, although the industry had had £60 million of public money poured into it in the past few years, many members of his union were 'still using the equipment and methods of 40 years ago*,' from which he argued that the industry needed 'a total restructuring of its finance and management'.

This is a matter which affects most immediately the 15,000 workers of the UCS, but also all workers in the shipbuilding and ship-repairing industry, estimated at 110,000 in the recently published *Report No 22 of the Commission on Industrial Relations* (Cmnd. 4756), and the 15,000 or more workers employed in ancillary industries, who are, unfortunately, not considered in that report. It is a matter of great urgency, moreover, for it is obviously no use to boast, however justifiably, that 'we can build the best ships in the world', if we

* 'New' methods here are already normal in the GDR, and even in Bulgaria!

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cannot secure orders for them even from our own shipowners, and it does not make sense to go on building them to be sold at a loss as has been happening under private ownership and management. It may save time, therefore, and obviate mistakes, if we base our plans for the nationalisation of the industry on what has been done, and done with marked success, in a somewhat comparable country, the German Democratic Republic.

In the first place, it is essential that nationalisation shall cover, not only the shipbuilding and shiprepairing yards, but also all the ancillary enterprises which supply them with machinery, ships' fittings and so on. All of these must be placed under a single management, which will co-ordinate their financing, development and operation, and which will also exercise control over, and enjoy the advisory service of, all the research establishments connected with these. It must have its own marketing organisation. This should not preclude a considerable measure of autonomy for each enterprise.

The nationalised industry, which we shall provisionally call 'British Shipbuilding', must not be crippled from its inception, as have been the British coal industry and British Rail, by financial liability to its previous owners. There can be no case for the 'compensation' of owners who have brought a flourishing key industry to disaster by mismanagement, and by the diversion of profits, which should have been ploughed back into it for its modernisation, to other industries, such as the aircraft industry, in order to pay higher dividends to shareholders, thanks, in many cases, to subsidisation by the Government. In recognition of this, 'British Shipbuilding' must be expected to stand on its own feet, financially, though perhaps only after some initial state subsidisation to enable it to repair the neglect of its previous owners. This is more or less what has happened, *mutatis mutandis*, in the GDR, and the result is that VVB Schiffbau, the equivalent of our proposed 'British Shipbuilding', now owns and manages a comprehensive industry built up virtually 'from scratch' over the past 15 years or so, which is economically viable as a whole, and also as regards its various component establishments.

'British Shipbuilding' must base its plans for the development and production of ships and ships' equipment on careful and long-sighted scientific study of world trends and world market requirements. This must be carried out by all sections of the rationalised industry, often in direct consultation with potential major customers, among whom must be rated high the USSR, whose profitable custom we are at present almost unique among the shipbuilding countries of the world in not enjoying—indeed in not even seriously soliciting.

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As a general rule, our present practice of building ships mostly on a 'one-off' basis must be abandoned, as it has been in most other shipbuilding countries, in favour of building ships of standard type in series. Each shipyard must be directed, according to its facilities and limitations, to specialise in the series production of a limited number of ship types which are regarded as most likely to meet the needs of the home and export markets, prior consideration being given to those of the potentially best customer (at the present time the USSR). The aim must be to secure contracts for the building of long series of the various ship types on offer.

Since such contracts can be concluded on the basis of agreed fixed prices, to be maintained for all the ships of a given series, the experience gained by the shipbuilders during the building and the subsequent operation of the earlier ships of each series should enable them, as is happening in the GDR, to reduce building costs and building time on each successive ship of the series, and thus to make a greater profit on each of them. It enables them also to offer to other customers, at attractive prices and with promises of early delivery, variants within the general parameters of these standard types that will satisfy their special requirements.

Further economy, both in price and in building time, can be effected by insisting that designers, and as far as possible customers, shall base the designs of ships on the use of standard pre-fabricated sections, which can be mass-produced. There must be no 'trade secrets', as between shipyards and between ancillary enterprises.

From the financial point of view, it must be obligatory on 'British Shipbuilding' that it shall be profit-making, both as a whole and as regards its integral productive components. As an incentive, it should be understood that any profit over and above that scheduled for each contract (which shall be taxed) shall be retained by the enterprise for its own use, e.g. for the capitalisation of its further development. This surplus profit shall not be subject to normal taxation, but, in order to dissuade managements from indulging in extravagant capital investment which may not be really productive, a reasonably small tax should be levied in respect of capital equipment installed. This would put the managements, and also the workers, on their mettle to make full and proper use of the equipment which they are thus enabled to instal. If, however, any enterprise should find itself in urgent need of capital for further development which is not immediately available from its retained profits, it should be able to ask 'British Shipbuilding' to help it out with a loan or credit, at low interest, either from their own reserves or, if necessary, from the Government.

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Salaries and wages should be negotiated annually between the management of 'British Shipbuilding' and the trade unions, a process which would obviously be facilitated if the latter were reorganised on an industrial basis. The rates should be related to productivity and to the necessity that the industry shall be competitive on the world market, i.e. without subsidisation, as is the case in the GDR. Due consideration must obviously be paid to the cost of living, and in this connection much could be done if the managements of enterprises, together with the local government authorities, were to take steps to provide good housing at low rentals for all employees, as is done in the GDR. It might serve as an added incentive to the workers if profits over and above those scheduled in the contracts, achieved by the adoption of their suggestions or by increased labour productivity in the shape of economies in working time and in consumption of materials, were shared, say on a 50:50 basis, between them and the management, the workers being at liberty to use their share collectively in any way which they might decide. Provision could usefully be made for diversification of production during slack periods, as is done in Japan. In this connection 'waste' materials could be utilised (in conjunction with temporarily unemployed skills, including perhaps those of the wives of workers) for the making of light-industrial products, such as cabinets for TV and radio sets, kitchen utensils, buckets and kayak canoes, as is the practice in the GDR.

The question of management would have to be worked out between the Government and the trade unions, but 'the old gang' would obviously have to be chucked out and replaced by people whom the workers could trust, and with whom they could work in harmony. Herr Alfred Dudszus, the General Director of the GDR's VVB Schiffbau, is not a politician, a banker, a financier, or a trade union official, like Lord Robens: he is an experienced shipbuilder, with the highest qualifications both in naval architecture and in marine engineering, and with proper respect and regard for the workers, by whom he is respected and trusted. His age is somewhere in the forties. I feel sure that the British shipbuilding industry could produce such a personality, but it goes without saying that his selection and appointment must be subject to the approval of the workers, and that they must be in a position to insist on his replacement if he fails to satisfy them. And in addition, the democratic structure of 'British Shipbuilding' would have to be secured by the inclusion of adequate workers' representation on its managing organs at all levels.

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BOOKS

The Barrel of a Gun

Ruth First

Allen Lane, 514 pp., £4.20

RUTH FIRST's book is a study of the military coups which have taken place in Africa over the past 20 years. The author, herself a deeply respected member of the South African liberation movement, has travelled widely in Africa in search of material, interviews and discussions, which have all gone to make up this wide ranging and ambitious book. Here are detailed accounts of the coups, their protagonists, the background of the events sparking them off, the plans, conspiracies, actions, takeovers and subsequent horse-tradings. The book will be a valuable work of reference for a long time to come. It raises problems of the instability of the political structures of the newly independent states. The armies, unchanged from the colonial period, remain the most disciplined and cohesive part of the state apparatus when political structures collapse under the weight of chronic social, economic and political crisis. The political forms imposed in the independence settlements have proved too frail to meet the challenges of the new period. Sometimes the army intervenes in political life purely for its own demands, for pay, for Africanisation, for greater prestige. These may be factors too in more complicated situations, as in Ghana, where army prestige was affronted by the impact of radical policies.

From the Sudan to Nigeria, in the former French as well as in the former British colonies, the book ranges wide and deep, pointing up the general characteristics of army takeovers as well as essential differences and particularities. Coups arise from political instability, and they perpetuate it. Those launched to prevent more radical solutions, as in Ghana, merely exacerbate the acute problems under which 'normal' political life has broken down. They continue to maintain the neo-colonialist relationship. The more radical coups have so far failed to establish stable democratic societies, in which the mass, popular movements and organisations can take their necessary place. Without such moves towards democracy, the most radical coups will come unstuck.

It is in this area relating to the groundswell of African politics that the book is weakest. As the narrative of one coup after another unfolds, the impression grows of 'ghost town' politics. The soldiers come and go in a vacuum. The other protagonists scarcely appear. As Ruth First makes clear she is dealing with the internal political forces of the African states and so one cannot expect detailed treatment of the extent of foreign intervention, though it haunts the background of the book continuously. The other political forces of the national bourgeoisie, the working class, the peasantry, the students, the academics: what happens to them? They may be temporarily submerged, but not for long. Their class interests are important factors in any coup situation, and coups reflect even in very distorted ways these basic social factors.

The book tends to lend credence to the view of African politics as little more than the battle for loot between different élite groups. But this is only part of the picture. Even soldiers have to take account of the people. The very suppression of democracy, implicit in a coup and rule by soldiers, weighs most heavily on the popular forces but they cannot be completely suppressed. In Ghana, in spite of the threat of court martial and the death

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penalty, there were strikes of workers. There have been arrests of trade union leaders in Nigeria. What happens to national bourgeois elements? How far do they continue to manipulate power behind the scenes?

The view of African politics as a battle between the élites is linked to the verdict that political independence settlements in essence represent merely an accommodation between the colonial power and the élite leadership of the independence movements. Of course neo-colonialism tries to convert a defeat for imperialism into a victory, but to see mainly this element of the independence struggle is to minimise the powerful mass force which inflicted real defeat on the colonial system.

To make these criticisms is not to ask for a quite other book but for a more detailed discussion of the other centres of power, actual and potential, in Africa today. Ruth First has aimed high and wide in this important pioneer work. She has illuminated important new areas of African politics. Now, with the present balance of world forces, with weakly developed class differentiation, with acute internal crises in every African state, where do the anti-imperialist forces go from here and how can we in Europe extend our solidarity?

JOAN BELLAMY

Aid as Imperialism

Teresa Hayter

Penguin, 222 pp., 30p

TERESA HAYTER'S book is concerned with the activities of three of the main organisations involved in the business of aid to underdeveloped countries, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development. It was written whilst she was employed by the Overseas Development Institute with finance from the World Bank. Her conclusions were such that the ODI, urged on by the World Bank, refused to publish it. As a result it is now available, through Penguin Books, to a much wider audience. And a good thing too.

Miss Hayter's subject is the use made of aid for 'leverage' — the attempt to influence the general economic policies of the recipient countries. It should come as no surprise to readers in Britain, remembering IMF visitations in the 1960s, to discover that this influence is used to secure 'orthodox' economic policies, deflation, removal of import controls, encouragement of private foreign investment, soft-pedalling on nationalisation and on land reform. Other writers have criticised the bias of these organisations towards right-wing orthodoxy. Miss Hayter courageously went further and developed a thorough-going socialist critique finishing with the view that aid is 'the smooth face of imperialism' in that it bolsters up reactionary regimes and helps to keep the world safe for capitalist trade and investment.

There are problems here (and Miss Hayter is sensibly aware of them). Frequently international organisations only urge reactionary or faint-hearted reformist regimes to do what they were perfectly prepared to do anyway (Mr Wilson's squeeze in 1966 for instance). The relationship is a complex one. Many details needed for an assessment are unavailable because negotiations are secret. Further, Miss Hayter's standpoint is based on a revulsion against all aspects of neo-colonialism of which aid policies are just a part.

But we can't have everything in one short book, and this study is a very useful contribution. It will stimulate a lot of thinking amongst those who have illusions about the aims of aid-giving and amongst those who are seriously concerned that 'aid' really should be aid.

P. F. LEESON

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Through the Bridewell Gate

Tom MacIntyre

Faber & Faber, 220 pp., £2.25

TOM MACINTYRE deals with the events of May 1970 when two Ministers of the Dublin Government were sacked and later charged with conspiracy to import arms to be used for the defence of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland who feared repetition of the pogrom of August 1969, when they were attacked by the regular and special constabulary and by civilian right-wingers—all armed.

The trial ended, after a fourteen days hearing, with a verdict of not guilty. The book gives a day-to-day precis of the proceedings, interspersed with a satirical commentary; indeed there are some brilliant examples, particularly in the case of a senior civil servant who finds himself having to give evidence against his former Minister; and the Englishman who becomes innocently involved in the attempted arms importation. It is worth reading for this, but not if you want the answers as to why highly placed persons, never known before for militant politics, should be accused as they were. Was it genuine emotional involvement with the situation in the North? or was it a reflection of a personal power struggle in the Dublin Government?

I would say that it was more a reflection of the confusion generated when the Dublin Government (inclusive of the two Ministers) took the turn of abandoning the objective of national independence, and sought instead an accomodation with the British Government which was concretised in the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement of 1966 and in a simultaneous application for membership of the Common Market. This line of policy was flung out of gear by the upsurge of the struggle for civil rights in the North with its subsequent violent course. Another aspect was the need to take the leadership of that struggle out of the hands of the left-wing and republican forces. Like the attempted importation of arms, this failed.

A foreign journalist who covered the arms trial said it reminded him of African politics. How right he was. With partition, colonialism and neo-colonialism, what other kind of a political situation could exist? However, the change is coming.

MICHAEL O'RIORDAN

The Paris Commune 1871

Stewart Edwards

Eyre & Spottiswoode,

418 pp., £4.50

MR STEWART EDWARDS has written an objective but not unsympathetic account of the causes and actions which led to Paris being ruled by the people for two months. By March 1871, Paris had seen, not only the defeat of the French armies by the Prussians, but also the tightening siege of the city. Thiers and the Government left Paris and went to Versailles. This left the city in the control of the municipal authorities. When elections were held, there was an alliance of the lower middle class and working class, which gained power, and in the succeeding weeks attempted in impossible circumstances to put into effect some major items of social reform. It could not last. Isolated pockets of advanced ideas can germinate in unfavourable soil, but cannot flourish. By Whit, the Commune's power was ended. Torn by internal dissension, unprepared and without a basic political philosophy to guide it, it inevitably fell to the joint attacks of the French Government and the threat of the Prussian troops. Mr Edwards characterises the Commune as 'the upsurge of a repressed population' and calls it the culmination of a century of revolutionary activity. He calls it the last eruption of 'an other-

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wise extinct volcano'. Seen in isolation as part of French history he may well be right, but viewed against the background of the international working class movement the Commune can be clearly seen as a marker beacon which lit the way towards the Russian revolution in 1917 and is still shining. This book is well written, fully illustrated, scholarly in approach and well worth reading. Local libraries should have it on their shelves!

EDDIE AND RUTH FROW

Marxism and Philosophy

Karl Korsch

NLB, 160 pp., £2

KARL KORSCH was an early member of the German Communist Party. He was expelled in 1926 for ultra-leftist political views and activities. This book contains reprints of four of his essays written between 1922 and 1930. The most important (and the longest) are 'Marxism and Philosophy' (1923) and 'Anti-Critique' (1930)—his reply to criticisms of it made especially by leading members of the Communist International who bracketed it with Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* as 'revisionist' and 'idealist'. This latter work is now regarded in a quite different, more positive, light. A reappraisal of the former should likewise be made.

For this essay, written while Korsch was a leading communist, says many important and illuminating things, not only about the development and meaning of the philosophical ideas of Marx and Engels, but especially about their *practical, political,* as well as their theoretical importance, before and particularly after the socialist revolution. One can disagree with formulations, some of which seem one-sided, others somewhat mechanistic. But he does open up for deeper discussion questions such as the role of intellectual life in the life of society, social consciousness and ideology and the real meaning of materialist dialectics.

His 'Anti-Critique' is quite a different kettle of fish. It is, for the most part, a sustained philosophico-political attack on the Third International and on Lenin whose credibility, capability and integrity as a materialist philosopher are impugned. Lenin is linked with Kautsky as a rigid 'orthodox' (orthodox being used here as a most dirty word) Marxist, of not basing his philosophy on 'any essential theoretical foundation', of not being concerned whether the philosophy he was propounding was true or untrue, but only with the practical, political, party advantages to be gained, etc., etc. In short, distortion and bile in plenty.

Thanks are due to Fred Halliday, the translator, for coping so well with what he himself describes as Korsch's '. . . highly involved, labyrinthine prose'.

JACK COHEN

Society of the Future

August Bebel

Progress Publishers (Central Books), 154 pp., 20p

A TIRELESS PROPAGANDIST and great political leader, Bebel played an important part in the growth on a Marxist basis of the German social-democratic movement in the second half of the last century. Here we have an abridgement of the final section of his classic work *Woman and Socialism* (1879), giving a brilliant picture of future socialist society. Separate chapters deal with the basic features of socialist society, agriculture, the state, education, art, literature, and the free development of the individual. Although written so long ago it is still worth reading because of the wide range of questions for which it predicts solutions, and because many of the latter, but by no means all, are already part of socialist reality. Bebel's account is still valuable despite certain theoretical defects due especially to his neglect of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1875.

CLEMENS DUTT

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The Anti-Hitler Coalition
Victor Issraeljan

Progress Publishers (Central Books), 422 pp., £1.25

THIS LATEST ADDITION to the series of works by Soviet historians on the foreign policy of their country deals with inter-allied diplomacy during the second world war, 1941-45. It is particularly well documented, and both those who were politically aware at that time and those of a younger generation will find it of absorbing interest. In particular, the record of deliberate lies told to the Soviet Government about alleged decisions to open a second front in the west, first in 1942 and then in 1943—when millions of Soviet soldiers and civilians were dying in the battle against the Hitler armies—shows up inescapably that *in practice* the British and American Governments (right-wing Labour representatives included) were following the policy put forward *openly* in 1941 both by Senator (later President) Truman and by Col. Moore-Brabazon, British Minister for Aircraft Production: to let the Russians and the Germans bleed each other to the maximum before opening the second front. It is surprising, just because of this, that the author—one of the outstanding younger Soviet historians—omits any mention of the signs of an anti-Soviet current among the highest British authorities immediately following Hitler's attack on the USSR, which aroused general indignation among the people. These included Churchill's instruction to the Foreign Office to describe the Soviet Union as 'co-belligerent', not as ally; his instruction to the BBC not to play the 'International'—then the official Soviet anthem—as the allied anthems had been played up to that day (June 22) before the 9 p.m. news; the attempt of General Pownall, GOC the London district, to prevent photographers taking pictures of him shaking hands with Deputy Chief of the Soviet General Staff, arriving as head of the Soviet Military Mission in July 1941; and the anti-Soviet circular to officers in the Middle East issued by the GOC there (August 1941). Moreover, while rightly drawing the *conclusion from their behaviour* that the British and American governments were expecting the Soviet Union to be greatly enfeebled at the end of the war, while the decisive factor would be 'Anglo-American strength' (pp. 15-16, 375 and elsewhere), the author overlooks the *direct* evidence that this was the British Government's calculation, contained in a statement by Sir Samuel Hoare, British Ambassador in Madrid, to the Spanish Foreign Minister in February 1943 (published later in London). However, these omissions by no means detract from the value of the book.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

The Decline of Working Class Politics
Barry Hindess

MacGibbon & Kee, 192 pp., £2.25

THE AUTHOR of this book seems to be telling the working class that all is lost in its battle for democracy. He sums it up in the concluding pages: 'What, it may be asked, can we do to preserve democracy? Nothing. That option is no longer available, if indeed it ever was in a society which allows, as ours does, such high concentrations of power to remain in so few hands. The rhetoric and ritual remain and there are many even now who can find a use for them.'

The preceding 179 pages seek to show, and to prove with many arguments, the growing disinterest of the mass of the workers with politics and present political parties. Unfortunately for the author, he wrote the book before May 1971 when a tidal wave of support for Labour swept the Tories out of many town halls throughout the country. He wrote it also before the huge campaign against the Industrial Relations Bill, and against Britain's entry into the Common Market, two of the

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issues on which many major unions have become politically involved. Would he, in the light of such experience, still have written about the 'decline in Labour support in the more working class areas of our cities'?

The author bases his study on a limited number of areas showing the shift of Labour Party strength from working class to what he calls middle class areas, claiming that this in turn affects Labour policies and makes working class support still less likely. The outstanding omission in this book, which is in my opinion inexcusable for a sociologist talking about working class politics, is his almost complete neglect of the trade union movement. While I know that British trade unions have traditionally neglected their political role, they *have* played a major part in Labour policy-making and leadership, and there are signs that they are playing a more active political role than for a long time past. We need to show trade unionists the role they can and should play, rather than confusing them with arguments that democracy is finished, as though they are mere spectators in a world of events that they have no part to play in.

Arguing that the increasing centralisation of political and economic decision making results in the estrangement of workers from party politics, the author says: 'It seems likely that parliamentary democracy will increasingly appear irrelevant in years to come. To a large extent, every electoral system is a sort of confidence trick and the maintenance of legitimacy through such tricks is the basic concern of all governments. When such tricks fail, as they are increasingly likely to, governments can be expected to resort to other measures.' And what then does the working class do, Mr Hindess? Stand idly by because of objective factors over which they have no control? Or take part in the battle to determine the future course of events?

SOLLY KAYE

Towards Revolution
Edited by John Gerassi
Weidenfeld & Nicolson
Vol. 1: China, India, Asia, the Middle East, 414 pp., £5.25
Vol. 2: The Americas, 818 pp., £5.25

'ONCE AGAIN,' writes John Gerassi in his foreword to this collection of documents, 'the future is revolution.' One wants to agree. At the same time one can't help but note that the form of revolution envisaged by Gerassi (we are dealing with the industrially undeveloped world) is rather curious. The most characteristic of the political positions which he presents is a contempt, from a leftist standpoint, for the organised labour movement. A union leadership, we learn, can gain a strong following simply by promising, and obtaining, better working conditions, shorter hours, higher wages—none of which is especially revolutionary. That is to say: one can fool city workers with revolutionary rhetoric and reformist actions; whereas, so it seems, one cannot so easily fool the peasantry. Thus the typical urbanised traditional communist party 'not only abandons its revolutionarism, it actually becomes counter-revolutionary: its stake is identified with the game. It is part of the establishment.'

The choice of documents reflects Gerassi's politics: there are relatively few selections from the so-called traditional communist parties, but a good many examples of the 'revolutionary phrase'. In the section on Palestine, for example, we find—apart from the obviously important Seven Point Platform of Al Fatah—documents from the very small Israeli Socialist Organisation (Matzpen), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine . . . and nothing from the Communist Party of Israel (Rakah), the mass character of whose influence, especially among the Arab Palestinians, is certainly known to the Israeli Government, if not yet to the British New Left.

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Would it be dogmatic for us to conclude that the theoretical tendency expressed in these volumes is one well-known to Marxists, one whose general characteristics and class basis have always been the subject of close study: one generally categorised as opportunism of the left? At any rate, the main themes, in one form or another, are there: a certain (but selective) anti-communism; a disdain, which we have already mentioned, for the 'organised, unionised, capitalised, skill-workerised, traditional "proletariat", which since the days of the renegade Samuel Gompers has stuck faithfully to its "economist" policies'; and a penchant for the spontaneous revolutionary act, for terrorism, for violence—not simply as a tactic, but as a so-called cleansing force. But here, as elsewhere, we have no theoretical discovery: it was, for example, the French anarcho-syndicalist Georges Sorel who wanted to teach us that 'it is to violence that socialism owes the highest moral values, by means of which it brings salvation to the modern world.' I will leave it to the reader to discover Lenin's opinion of Sorel.

GRAHAME LOCK

The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Towards State Intervention 1833-1848

William C. Lubenow

David & Charles, 238 pp., £3.50

THIS BOOK is not a comprehensive analysis of changes in society during the years covered, nor does it set out to be. It is in fact an extension of a Ph.D dissertation at the University of Iowa, presumably during the late 1960s. No biography or description of the author, however brief, can be found anywhere in the book, a serious omission in my opinion. This essay purports to examine early Victorian attitudes and political opinions and seeks to show that government growth was due more to traditional attitudes than new ideas. The author maintains that previous works on the subject follow the idea of government growth developing from the polerisation of 'individualism and collectivism'. He sets out to test three generalisations which contradict this idea.

The result is an illustration of the British art of compromise and steady, gentle reforming rather than violent changes. But little emerges on the effects of the movements of the developing proletariat; there are two fleeting references to Marx, one to Engels and none to contemporary proletarian spokesmen. Chartism, the Anti-Corn Law League and the Hungry Forties are all mentioned only in passing. Indeed a reader ignorant of nineteenth-century conditions could be forgiven for concluding that by and large the proletariat were content with gradual improvements in their lot.

An abundance of statements and attitudes is presented from contemporary newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, government papers and by numerous representatives of the propertied and middle classes, all centred around the issues of legislation between 1833 and 1848 dealing with the Poor Law, Public Health, the Railways and Factories. A picture emerges of an employing and propertied class threatened by proletarian disease, fearing discontent and upheaval, at the same time realising that regulated working conditions could stimulate demand and productivity, while also needing to prevent monopolisation of communications and supply routes by sectional class interests. Parliament can be seen as representing the conflict between the progressive thinkers of developing capitalism and the old aristocracy intent on preserving old privileges and conditions.

What the author's research shows is that developing capitalism necessitated certain reforms in order on the one hand to improve productivity and profitability, associated improvements in the conditions of the proletariat being secondary, and on the other to prevent social discontent

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from reaching disastrous levels. He fails to put his facts into class terms and draws the false lesson that 'the nineteenth-century revolution in government is a comforting paradigm of the way peaceful institutional change can occur in traditional political and social structures troubled and torn by massive economic and social dislocation.'

GREGORY DOUGLAS

The Finance of Local Government

N. P. Hepworth

Allen & Unwin, 342 pp., £2.10

THE ENGLISH RATING SYSTEM, which grew originally out of the Poor Relief Act of 1601, has been widely criticised —above all, because it is a heavier burden on the poor than on the rich. Hepworth's book outlines this and other disadvantages carefully and reasonably accurately. Although the author mentions the case for replacing the regressive rates system by a fairer alternative, such as a local income tax, this is not given the urgency or detailed attention that many in the labour movement would prefer. The book discusses also the other sources of local authorities' revenue, for a sum about as great as total rates revenue comes in grants from the Government, and another equally large sum from rents, trading income and similar sources. As far as capital expenditure is concerned, however, over 80 per cent comes from loans: the result of this was in 1966-67 a total interest bill of over £700 million, which was over half as much as capital expenditure during the year. The book also contains convenient summaries of the various reports and suggestions by official bodies concerning local authority finance, and outlines of some of the methods used to help give value for money.

PHIL GOODWIN

THEATRE

'THE CHINESE MACHINE' by Francis Dux at Unity Theatre, London, until October 17, is a black and white comedy of errors, with a science fiction suggestion of personality swapping, by prisoners returned from Vietnam. The point of the whole play may be a little unclear at the end but on the way a number of telling points are made entertainingly about racialism, Vietnam and the US military establishment.

F.N.

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LABOUR MONTHLY DISCUSSION GROUPS

ONE of *LM*'s forward-looking supporters has sent us word of a local development which is most certainly of interest to other readers. A *Labour Monthly* Discussion Group is being formed in Brighton: it's objectives are to extend *LM*'s circulation, to hold discussions on the contents, and to organise financial support. Their initial meeting will be considering the question of sales of this October issue at the Labour Party Conference.

In our issue of April this year, the Editor, recalling the highlights of *LM*'s second world war experience, wrote in his contribution to our Fifty Fighting Years series:

> *Labour Monthly* Discussion Groups began to be organised, at first spontaneously by local initiatives, and extended to reach, by June 1941, a total of over 250 Discussion Groups in localities all over the country.

This new group in Sussex is perhaps starting the ball rolling again: we (and, I am sure, they too) would be pleased to hear of other parts of the country in which the idea may be taken up. As a feature of *LM*'s Golden Jubilee year, this aid to local awareness in trade union branches and other organisations of the need for discussion and analysis of major issues, so many of which are covered in *LM*'s pages, can be of real value in stimulating local activity.

Nicola Seyd

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Serving the People, Kirill Meretskov. Progress Publishers (Central Books), 378 pp., £1.20.

Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, Eric R. Wolf. Faber & Faber, 328 pp., £3.

The Pursuit of Loneliness, Philip E. Slater. Allen Lane, 174 pp., £2.25.

The Discarded People, Cosmas Desmond. Penguin Books, 264 pp., 40p.

Birth of the Communist Manifesto, edited by Dirk J. Struik. International Publishers (Central Books), 224 pp., £1.50.

Politics and the Stages of Growth, W. W. Rostow. Cambridge University Press, 410 pp., £1.60.

Battle for the Caucasus, Andrei Grechko. Progress Publishers (Central Books), 366 pp., £1.25.

Capitalism, John Vaizey. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 224 pp., £2.50.

Education and Modernisation, M. D. Shipman. Faber & Faber, 276 pp., £4.

Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective, Richard Rose. Faber & Faber, 568 pp., £6.

The Struggle Against History, Ronald Segal. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 196 pp., £2.10.

Foreign Trade in a Planned Economy, edited by Imre Vajda and Mihaly Simai. Cambridge University Press, 222 pp ., £4.80.

The Pentagon Papers, Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy and Fox Butterfield. Bantam Books, 678 pp., 75p.

Further Left: a socialist magazine for teachers in further and higher education. Further Left, 26 pp., 10p.

The Common Market: What Would Entry Mean? Labour Research Department, 24 pp., 10p.

Common Market: the Tory White Paper Exposed, Ron Bellamy. Communist Party, 24 pp., 7p.

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